

LCQ3: Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

The Quota-free Scheme for Hong Kong Private Cars Travelling to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (the Scheme) has been implemented since July 1 this year. An applicant is required to first register for balloting via a designated website, then submit an application after being assigned a period of application submission through balloting, and after the application is approved, arrange an appointment for clearance before departure. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as many members of the public have relayed that the application procedures of the Scheme are complicated, and most of the available time slots shown on the Scheme's clearance booking system have quotas to spare, whether the authorities will streamline the application procedures of the Scheme, such as cancelling the balloting procedure, waiving the requirement of arranging clearance appointment before each departure, or discussing with the Mainland Government the removal of the daily limit on the number of applications to be processed;

(2) of the numbers of successful balloting applicants in respective rounds of balloting since the implementation of the Scheme and, among them, the number of those who have subsequently arranged clearance appointments; whether it has reviewed if there were cases of successful balloting applicants not arranging clearance appointments; if there were such cases, of the measures in place to ensure that the application quotas will not be wasted; and

(3) of the number of approved applicants since the implementation of the Scheme and, among them, the number of those who have taken out cross-boundary motor insurance under the "unilateral recognition" arrangement; whether it has reviewed if the implementation situation of the unilateral recognition policy has fallen short of expectation; if the situation has fallen short of expectation, of the improvement measures in place?

Reply:

President,

The Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles (the Scheme) is a policy breakthrough allowing eligible Hong Kong private cars to travel between Hong Kong and Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) without the

need to obtain regular quotas. It facilitates Hong Kong residents' self-driving to Guangdong for business, visiting families or sightseeing on a short-term basis. Since July 1 this year, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have allowed approved Hong Kong private cars to travel between Hong Kong and Guangdong via the HZMB. The Scheme enables citizens to embrace the opportunities brought by the HZMB, facilitating further connection among cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and promoting economic development and integration within the area.

In consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, I would like to reply to the three parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Pui-leung as follows:

(1) and (2) To ensure smooth operation of the Scheme at its launch, the governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong agreed to set a cap on the number of applications to be accepted, which will be allocated by computer balloting; and applicants should also make travel bookings for specific dates and time via the system. To facilitate people's completion of application procedures of the Scheme, the Transport Department (TD) has launched a one-stop online application system to process balloting, application and travel bookings. We will continue to keep in view the application situation of the Scheme, and subject to people's travel needs, review the application cap, balloting and travel booking arrangement with relevant Mainland authorities in a timely manner, with a view to providing greater convenience for people's travel.

In fact, we have all along been enhancing the arrangements in the light of the implementation situation of the Scheme and people's needs, including increasing the application cap from 200 per working day to 300; increasing the number of vehicle examination centres in Hong Kong designated for the Scheme by the Guangdong government with a view to enhancing the daily vehicle examination capacity; adjusting the number of travel booking timeslots (from six timeslots adjusted to four timeslots), so as to allow greater flexibility for people to arrange their travel; liaising with relevant Mainland authorities to enhance the management system of carparks in Guangdong for recognition of Hong Kong vehicle registration marks, so as to allow vehicles with single car plate to enter and exit; and from time to time providing the latest information on driving in the Mainland on the dedicated website for the Scheme, for example, the TD has published the Note on the Use of Electric Vehicle Adapter Device for reference of electric vehicle owners participating in the Scheme. Through these facilitation measures, Hong Kong residents participating in the Scheme can travel at ease, safely and conveniently, thereby realising the "one-hour living circle" in the GBA.

The Scheme has been open for application since June 2023, applications are accepted every two weeks. If the application number exceeds the cap, balloting will be needed for allocation. As at end of November, 14 rounds of applications were conducted, of which the recent four rounds did not require balloting; a total of about 48 000 people may submit their applications in the 14 rounds of applications, meaning that on average each round accepts applications from around 3 000 people. To better utilise the application quota, the TD has put in place a replacement mechanism to include the quota of successful applicants who did not submit applications within the assigned

period in the application quota of the subsequent round after next, with a view to fully utilising the application quota. As at November 30, a total of around 30 800 applications have completed all procedures of the two places, and are eligible for travel.

There has been continued upsurge in the monthly travel booking numbers under the Scheme, from about 3 700 travel bookings in July, multiplied to about 9 900 in August, 16 700 in September, 26 000 in October and 32 600 in November, totalling at 89 000. We consider that it is purely car owners' own travel arrangements upon approval of their applications of the Scheme, and this does not involve approved quota being wasted. We believe that as people become more familiar with the driving environment and routes in the Mainland and have a better grasp of such information as travelling, sightseeing and consumer hotspots in the Mainland, more applications will be expected, and that more approved applicants will make travel bookings through the online system. We will continue to keep in view the application and travel situations and will, together with the Guangdong side, review and adjust the arrangements for balloting, application cap and booking, etc in a timely manner, for example, simplifying the renewal applications involving no changes to the particulars about owners, vehicles and designated drivers so that applicants may continue joining the Scheme conveniently.

(3) Under the "unilateral recognition" arrangement, applicants for the Scheme may, within the validity period of the statutory motor insurance policy taken out for their vehicles in Hong Kong, procure top-up cover of qualified Traffic Accident Liability Insurance for Motor Vehicles of the Mainland and to select further coverage of the Mainland Commercial Insurance for Motor Vehicles depending on their needs, providing applicants with comprehensive and convenient insurance arrangements from Hong Kong insurance companies.

Of the some 30 800 applications approved from the launch of the Scheme to the end of November 2023, there were nearly 4 000 cross-boundary motor insurance policies issued by Hong Kong insurance companies under the "unilateral recognition" arrangement. To review the implementation of the "unilateral recognition" policy, the Insurance Authority (IA) has been maintaining close liaison with the insurance sector to understand and follow up the difficulties encountered by the insurance companies concerned. Relevant bureaux and departments have been co-ordinating with the IA on feasible measures to refine the "unilateral recognition" policy, which include giving consideration to enhancing the application system of the Scheme to make it more convenient for drivers who take out "unilateral recognition" insurance policies. We will also step up promotion of the "unilateral recognition" policy, and will communicate with the relevant Guangdong authorities so as to explore feasible options for boosting the usage rate of "unilateral recognition" insurance products.

Thank you President.